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CURSORY REMARKS.

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CURSORY REMARKS,

On a Treatise intitl'd,

THOUGHTS ON

NATURE and RELIGION;

Or, an APOLOGY for the

RIGHT of private JUDGMENT, maintained.

By MICHAEL SERVETUS, M. D.

Doctor of Laws of Cork M.D.

In his ANSWER to

JOHN CALVIN.

By a CLERGYMAN of the CHURCH of ENGLAND.

Dr. Mearns of Cork

C O R K :

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MDCCCLXXV.



CURSORY REMARKS, &c.

IT is one of the inestimable privileges, by which his majesty's subjects are distinguished, that every man has not only an unrestrained liberty of choosing and professing his own opinions, but of freely communicating those opinions, how extraordinary soever, to the public, either in his own name, or in any other which he may think fit to assume for the purpose: And were this privilege always exercised in matters of religion (for I have at present no other in view,) with discretion and moderation, it could not fail to prove a most important blessing to mankind; since by free discussion, thus managed, truth would be more easily ascertained and more firmly established, and the spirit of religion more rationally and extensively promoted in the world.

It were much to be wished, that the author of a late publication in this city, entitled, "Thoughts on Nature and Religion," had

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been a little more attentive to these qualifications: but it is surely no proof of his discretion (not to mention any thing of the subject and conduct of the work), that he who had hitherto been accounted a follower of Calvin's model of worship and discipline, hath chosen to prefix to his book a name, which cannot be mentioned without casting an indelible stain on the memory of that great reformer; the intemperance of his zeal against the unhappy Servetus, being now generally considered without any of those mitigations, which might fairly be derived from the peculiar circumstances of the times he lived in. Our author's humanity will not be displeased to be reminded, that the rights of conscience and private judgment, far from being understood, as they happily are at present, in their full extent, were then circumscribed within certain limits, beyond which they were neither respected, nor allowed; and unjustifiable measures of coercion were therefore sometimes too readily pursued, probably without suspicion of their enormity, as the most obvious method to convince the world, that they who had separated themselves from the communion of the Church of Rome, retained the same zeal for the essential doctrines of Christianity, and the same
 abhorrence

abhorrence of some extravagant tenets unjustly charged upon them, as they who remained in it: so much easier was it, in those days, to shake off the authority, than the spirit of Popery! And after all, if no weight is to be allowed to this consideration, in excuse for Calvin (as a defence of him it is not offered), it will be still more difficult to vindicate the same tyrannical spirit in the Socinians, which they exercised (after the tragedy at Geneva) wherever they had power;

Iliacos intra muros peccatur, et extra.

I shall mention an instance or two, of the effect of this spirit upon those of their own party, and leave the author to consider them with all the tendernefs and indulgence that can be claimed by human infirmity, from one of the same species. Budnæus, a principal leader of the sect in Lithuania, was deposed from his ministerial functions, and publicly excommunicated, with all his disciples, for maintaining that our blessed Saviour was born like other men in a natural way, and before he could be restored was obliged to recant; and Francis David, superintendant of the Socinian churches in Transylvania, was thrown into prison (where he died), for having denied that Christ

was to be worshipped. So far did they, in those days, fall short of the bold positions, which now make the fundamental articles of the Socinian creed !

NEITHER doth our author exhibit many more marks of moderation in the prosecution of his work, than of prudence in the title-page. In his very introduction, he begins an unprovoked and illiberal attack upon the clergy, and continues it throughout the book without distinguishing between the Protestant clergy and others, except that, towards the conclusion, he can only be understood to speak of the church of Rome. But had it not been more candid with regard to the clergy, as well as more obliging to the public, to have declared his meaning explicitly from the beginning ? Writers of another class might be suspected of artifice in this kind of proceeding ; as if, by the help of this ambiguity, they hoped to keep alive the curiosity of certain readers, which might otherwise be apt to grow languid and indifferent to the most novel speculations, if they did not expect, ever and anon, a little roasting of the clergy. But it would be injurious to the known character of Dr. Servetus to suspect him either of so low a contrivance,

vance, or of giving countenance to that hackneyed insinuation, that,

The priests of all religions are the same.

CLEAR, however, as the Doctor may be from any possible imputation of that sort, it may not be much amiss, now we are upon the subject of the clergy, to remind him, that the first promoters of religious knowledge, and the most strenuous defenders of liberty of conscience, were clergymen. The memory of Wickliff, John Huf, Jerome of Prague, Luther, with many others, who led the way to the general reformation, deserves to be had in the highest honour on that account. Nor are there any where to be found truer friends to the civil and religious rights of mankind, than the clergy of the established church. From THEM he will meet with none of the reproaches he seems to expect, 'for taking reason for his guide' [page iv.]; but the Doctor will give them leave to lament, that he so soon deserted her, to follow a phantom, which bewildered him in devious and dangerous ways. Far from desiring to confine the knowledge of the holy scriptures to themselves, the clergy wish them to be in the hands, and to engage the heads and hearts of all. It is their earnest desire,

fire, that *all the Lord's people were prophets* ; but they would have it duly considered, that *no prophecy is of private interpretation* ; that the scriptures are neither to be expounded nor applied, to favour this or that hypothesis, according to the particular fancy of any person ; but the several passages relative to any point of doctrine, are to be compared one with the other, and a judgment carefully formed, according to the general tenor and meaning of them all, *without partiality and without hypocrisy*. It would be matter of great satisfaction to the clergy, to see a gentleman, eminent in his own profession, dedicate so much of his time to the study of the sublimest and most abstruse subjects of theirs, were it not for the unaccountable mistakes he is fallen into. These give them just concern ; although they are willing to acquit him of any ill intention to religion in what he has published, and trust that there will be little occasion to complain of the effect it may have in the world.

HAVING said thus much in defence both of the clergy and the author, I shall proceed to speak my sentiments freely, altho' briefly, of the performance ; and to prevent any suspicion that I mean to give the Doctor the least cause of offence by my observations, I will begin

gin them before I enter on the principal subject, with proposing (what seems to me would be no small improvement of the work) that the preliminary chapters, which, for want of the usual guard of a respectable title to protect them, stand exposed to the rude teeth of criticism, be revised and new-cast; for in their present form, no title that I can think of could fit them; and to be sure the author was of the same opinion, or he would never have sent them into the world so destitute. The least exceptionable way, perhaps, would be, in case the work shall happen to survive this first impression, throw them together into one, under the general name of INTRODUCTION, changing that which is at present so called into a PREFACE; and if on better consideration, the Doctor does not find that both may be well spared, without any great detriment to the main argument, he will be pleased to omit either the one or the other, as he shall think fit, carefully preserving, however, at all events, the curious dissertation of animal vegetation, Moses, and the Goodwin Sands.

In these three chapters the Doctor directs his readers to three sources of error, viz. passions, violence and prejudice, not distributing these equally, in the common method, each
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in its respective chapter, but crowding the first and second into one, and putting the last in possession of a chapter by itself; attended, however, with a good deal of multifarious learning, which required, I assure you, no small degree of ingenuity to suit to this place, rather than to any other part of the work. But it is not for the regularity of method, so much as the propriety of the contents in this division, that I am solicitous. The enumeration of them is obviously incomplete, and I would fain give my assistance, as far as it will go, to supply the deficiency: nor would I be thought to assume any great merit on the occasion; for it cannot but have occurred to every common reader, if he has by chance advanced thus far in the book, that at least one very copious source of error is omitted, viz. the desire of figuring amongst the literati. To obtain this object, old systems are ransacked, new books are compiled, and the public are pestered with a detail of the crudest and most visionary hypotheses, under the pretended sanction of reason, observation and holy writ. The Doctor, I flatter myself, will not be more surprised at this instance of his own inaccuracy, than obliged to me for the hint, which I shall but recommend to him to enter in his interleaved

ed copy, to be enlarged and improved at his leisure: and then take my leave of this prefatory part, on which I have already dwelt too long, I fear, for my reader's patience. But I will endeavour to make him the best amends in my power, by the brevity of what I have further to remark on this curious book. For, having no ambition to publish a volume, I shall not think it necessary to follow the Doctor step by step, through all the ambages of his recondite erudition, which I pretend not to emulate. Happily for me,—truth is simple, and easy to be understood by the unprejudiced; nor do my views extend further than to place her in a just and natural light. In fact, our author's success affords no very strong temptation to launch out into the ocean of conjectural disquisition. He has explored new regions, it is true; but his discoveries will be found, on experience, to be like those of modern adventurers, of no possible use to the world, but by serving to deter others from indulging the like fruitless and dangerous curiosity.

THERE are three principal points which our author labours to establish, viz. That the human soul is material, and consequently mortal; That Christ was no more than mere man; And, that the doctrine of the Trinity is not founded in

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scripture, but solely on the decisions of the church. These are the propositions, for the support of which, all the other collateral or subordinate articles seem to be introduced.

As to the first, There is no axiom in philosophy more indubitable, than that matter is absolutely passive and inactive ; it may be made use of as the instrument, or means, but can never be the principle, or cause of any production or operation whatsoever. The only property of matter, which hath yet been complimented with the name of power, is that which is called its *Vis Inertiæ* ; and if the learned Doctor can contrive from thence, by any modification, arrangement, or collision of atoms, to strike out activity, perception, volition, thought and judgment, I will from henceforth renounce Sir Isaac Newton and all his works.

SUPPOSING, however, but by no means admitting, the possibility of this, still the Doctor will be far enough from having gained his point. Matter, if it acts at all, cannot act but in contact. It can have no effect, where there is no material subject to act upon. But our mental faculties and perceptions are not thus limited. By abstraction we frame general ideas, which have no existence in nature. By memory we recal the
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idea of things past. By imagination we create the idea of things that never did, never can exist. By expectation and hope we anticipate enjoyment, as by fear and anxiety we suffer, while the evil is distant, perhaps imaginary. Whilst our material organs are absorbed in the insensibility of sleep, which is indeed the shadow of death, our ideas are oftentimes no less vivid than the reality. We are transported into remote countries, which we have never seen, and perform a part in imaginary scenes, to which nothing in our real character or situation can possibly correspond. Not that it is only in the illusion of a dream, that the mind acts thus independently of the body. What effect of terror, pity or satisfaction, do we not experience in reading the history of times and places with which we can have no possible concern? The same may be said of theatrical representations, and fictitious works of invention and fancy, which engage the attention equally with real life. In reveries, and what is called castle-building in the air, the mind is so much abstracted and absent, as to be insensible to every present object; and how this insensibility to matter, can be derived from a material source, seems to require all Doctor Servetus's learning to explain.

FURTHER ; matter, if it could act at all, could act no otherwise than necessarily. In that case we could not deliberate or suspend our judgment, which must be necessarily determined by the subject before us : nor could we call our thoughts from one subject, to fix them on another, as now we can at pleasure. We could not review our past actions and designs, and rejudge them according to the worthiness or demerit of the several circumstances attending the execution, and the very intention of them ; for even for the intention, which was never carried into act, we are conscious of being accountable.

To mention but one circumstance more. Were we destitute of an immaterial substance in our frame, we could have no intercourse by contemplation and devotion, as now we have, with the Father of Spirits ; a benefit, which I am certain, how lightly soever he may esteem external worship, Doctor Servetus would neither relinquish, nor wish the world should be deprived of, for any consideration whatsoever.

THESE are effects of daily and constant experience, and without mentioning inspiration and prophecy, are sufficient to prove the soul to be an immaterial spiritual substance. But Doctor
Servetus

Servetus doth not see how spirit can act upon body, and therefore, although Moses tells him, that the world and all things were created, and (to use his own phrase) 'nature was instituted' by God, the eternal and infinite Spirit, and Moses is an author the Doctor seems to have a tolerable opinion of in general, yet not being quite certain of the fidelity of translators, (p. 33.) because there is, it seems, a geographical error in Ezekiel xxix. 10. Ethiopia being put for Arabia, which cannot but be of the last importance to the truth of the Mosaic history, he thinks it safest to trust to his own sagacity in making out the true system of things. He has accordingly (p. 64.) indulged his readers with an elaborate circumstantial description of the most secret and mysterious work of nature, in performing which, no spirit (but animal spirit) appears to him to be concerned. Having thus wisely laid the foundation in a matter of a pretty general experience, and probably secured the favourable attention of the generality of readers thereby, he goes on the more boldly with his work, and not content with his proofs (as he calls them) from reason and observation, which have been considered, roundly asserts, (page 68.) that the idea of a soul distinct from the body, is contrary to revealed religion. A proposition of such magnitude cannot but
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strike the reader who is at all conversant in scripture, with astonishment and indignation.

Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu ?

However, that the Doctor may have no room to complain that his argument is not attended to, I shall take the matter up from the beginning, and proceed to consider it with all the patience I am possessed of.

IN the account of the creation of Adam, we find, that “ God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul :” by which is to be understood nothing less than that man is essentially distinguished from all other animals, for upon them no such gift is recorded to have been bestowed. Besides that it is expressly said, “ that God created man in his own image. In the image of God made he him.” and invested him with dominion over all other creatures, whether in the sea, the air, or on the earth. The same superiority plainly declared in the original of man, is likewise preserved at his decease, “ Who knoweth the spirit of a man, that goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast, that goeth downward to the earth ?” And again ; “ Then shall the dust return to the earth, as it was ; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

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Here is as evident a distinction as can be made by words, between the body and the soul. The one was made of earth, and returns into it: the other came from God, and returns to him. This is Solomon's opinion. But, "Behold! a WISER than Solomon is here." Dr. Servetus maintains, on the contrary, that the whole man perisheth at death, and is resolved into its original dust. In case the pious reader should cry out, "What shall a man have in exchange for his soul?" the Doctor has an anodyne, which will quiet your apprehensions. For he has secured you a soul at the day of judgment, "when your vile body shall be changed," not indeed, as St. Paul says, "into a glorious body;" but, which is better, into a SPIRIT. You see, if you will but have patience, you shall be nobly provided for; and as your soul could be of no use to you in the grave, he thinks you may very well dispense with the want of it there, and afterwards your new soul will amply supply its place. For, if you suppose that you have a soul at present, and the body (as he assures you) is at the resurrection to be changed into a soul, then you will have two souls [page 73]; which is certainly most unreasonable to expect. But whatever comfort our author kindly intends by this alterative, as to the soul; it may not, perhaps, entirely answer

swer the purpose, as to the body ; for which he must allow us to be a little solicitous ; it being a fundamental article of our belief, “ that our mortal bodies shall put on immortality ; shall be cloathed upon from heaven,” as the Apostle speaks, 2. Cor. v. 2. and made fit for the celestial habitation they are then going to enter into. There is no question, that after his resurrection, Christ was no longer mortal, and yet he had a body. “ Handle me and see,” said he ; and yet with that body he ascended into heaven, where he “ sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and shall, at the end of the world, so come again in like manner as he was seen going into heaven.” I may now appeal to the Doctor’s candour, whether these passages are favourable or not, to his hypothesis. Indeed, he seems to be somewhat doubtful in his mind (I beg pardon, in his cerebrum), if one can judge by his fluctuating mode of expression, which falls far short of his usual precision and peremptoriness ; for he now and then deigns to use St. Paul’s own phrase, “ spiritual body,” although the whole purport of his argument is to prove, that after the change we shall have no body at all.

OUR author thinks himself well supported, nevertheless, by our Saviour’s own words to the Sadducees, in answer to their captious question,
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concerning the woman who had been successively married to seven husbands, "In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven?"

He tells them, that men shall then be as the angels in heaven." Now, saith the Doctor, as it is only in our spirit, or soul, that we can resemble the angels, and we must wait for this resemblance until the resurrection, it is plain, that at present we have no spirit, or soul at all.

BUT is not this conclusion drawn a little too hastily? For, although "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," when free from infirmity and decay, yet in general we know, that even in this life we are "made but little lower than the angels." In the great scale of beings we are probably the next in degree; and therefore cannot but bear a resemblance to the angelic nature in several respects, even in our present state. By our intellectual and moral faculties, like the heavenly angels, we can contemplate, adore and imitate (however faintly) the perfections of God; we are able to enquire into, to understand and in some measure to obey his will "on earth, as it is in heaven;" to cultivate and improve the generous and noble affections of the heart, in sympathising with and relieving the distressed, in "rejoicing with them that do rejoice," and promoting in

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various ways, according to our respective situations, the happiness both temporal and eternal, of our fellow creatures. And in what powers, or what employment can we be imagined to resemble the holy angels more nearly ? It is in the exercise of such powers, and in the discharge of such duties, that those blessed spirits are employed ; and in that employment consist their exalted felicity and glory. By the text referred to then it is not intended to declare, that there is at present no resemblance, of any kind, between the angelic and human natures ; but that the resemblance which we now bear to the angels, shall hereafter be enlarged in a manner of which we are at present incapable. Nor is the passage to be understood in the utmost extent of the words ; but the sense is necessarily limited (according to the subject and occasion of our Saviour's discourse) to a freedom from carnal appetites ; which, however necessary, in our present condition, to provide a succession of mortals upon the earth, can be no part of our constitution " when this corruptible body shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality ;" the distinction in our Saviour's argument being not between body and soul, but between our present and future bodies : between the infirmity of flesh and blood, and the excellency of a spiritual body.

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AND now the Doctor is heartily welcome to all the honour he can gain by this very apposite quotation. And as he has an excellent knack of pressing texts into his service, I will present him with one or two, which however untractable in OTHER hands, may, with a little of HIS dexterity, be brought to stand in the front of the next engagement. "Fear not them which kill the BODY, but are not able to kill the SOUL; but rather fear him, which is able to destroy BOTH BODY AND SOUL in hell," Mat. x. 28. "Father," said our Lord in his last ejaculation on the cross, "into thy hand I commend my SPIRIT," Luke xxiv. 46.

By this time it is easy to see, that the fabric which our author undertook to support (for he has not the disgrace of being the original builder) cannot stand. Like an ingenious workman, he did his best to cover over its defects, but it was "untempered mortar with which he daubed it." The plaistering has therefore failed, and the chinks and breaches are discovered to the very foundation. The reader will, doubtless, be curious to know the author's inducement to adopt a scheme so humiliating to human nature, and so dangerous to the morals of the bulk of mankind. The scheme is humiliating, as it pre-

cludes every argument drawn from philosophy and christianity, which enjoins us to reverence ourselves, to consider our "bodies as temples of the Holy Ghost," and to praise the great Creator for the pre-eminence he has graciously given us over all his other visible works. It is likewise of dangerous consequence to the morals of mankind, for notwithstanding the author has taken care expressly to maintain the doctrine of the resurrection and future judgment, yet the expiration of the soul with the body being much the more striking figure in the piece, and withal most alluring to all whose vices interest them to wish it may be true, they will be apt to look no further ; and indeed as our author denies the immateriality of the soul, because he cannot understand the manner how spirit can act on body, it will be a more difficult task than I would willingly impose upon him, to shew, that others are not equally intitled to reject the change of body into spirit for the same reason, viz. because they understand not how it can be brought to pass.

CONSCIOUS that some apology might justly be expected for starting a question of this kind, our author has the condescension to say, that it is of little or no importance to salvation, which way it is determined, viz. in his own way, or according

cording to the popular and general belief. But where God hath been pleased to give us information upon any point, that information is surely to be acquiesced in, and relied upon, as authentic and decisive ; it being in such a case not only an idle curiosity, but a criminal presumption, to indulge fruitless speculations, which “ minister questions, rather than Godly edifying in faith.” The Doctor would therefore have done well to consider the import not of one text alone (though even THAT, you see, is not to his purpose), but the general tenor of scripture, before he ventured to publish his opinion on this subject : and whatever service he may have intended to the protestant cause, by his zeal against the gross corruptions of purgatory and prayers to the dead, I cannot acquit him of the most fatal rashness in the exercise of that zeal ; which strikes indeed at the root of those errors, but withal endangers the first principles of religion natural and revealed. Purgatory may be overthrown without undermining fundamental truths, and the honour of God’s worship may be vindicated without debasing that of his creation. It would be abundantly for these purposes to shew, that neither of those doctrines has any foundation either in holy scripture, or in the practice of the antient church of Rome. It would be too large a field to enter upon at present,

sent, though no difficult task, to prove, that the scripture gives no countenance to either of those doctrines ; but in case these Remarks shall happen to fall into the hands of a member of that church, it may perhaps be a more prevailing argument, to shew the want of ecclesiastical antiquity, than that of scriptural authority. The former is therefore what I shall, with my reader's permission, briefly attempt.

TOWARDS the end of the fourth century, purgatory was become a subject of debate ; but was then rejected by St. Augustine. After having mentioned heaven and hell. " Of a third place (saith he) we are entirely ignorant. *Tertium penitus ignoramus.*" Pope Gregory the Great, about the year after Christ 600, was the first who ventured peremptorily to define the nature, and to fix the site of purgatory ; which he pronounced to be a fire in the bowels of the earth, wherein smaller sins were punished and purged by temporary pains. But the doctrine, as now held in the church of Rome, was not affirmed to be a divine truth before the year 1140 ; nor was it imposed as an article of faith until the council of Florence in 1439. It was afterwards confirmed under pain of anathema by the Council of Trent, in 1563, and hath ever since been held in the church

church of Rome, as an article of faith necessary to salvation. But if the foundation of the doctrine was weak and novel, the progress slow and gradual, the application of it was most infamous and immoral. Tetzels, a Dominican friar, who was employed to publish papal indulgence in Germany (the scandalous abuses of which were one immediate occasion of the reformation) used to declare, that the very moment the money chinks in the chest, the soul in purgatory flies away to heaven. It was the same impious Tetzels, who said, that if any man had ravished the Mother of God, his indulgences were sufficient to efface the guilt. The reader will make his own reflections,

THE other doctrine, of Saint Worship, is not only derogatory to the honour due to God, who disdains to share it with his creatures; but altogether needless on our part; for God hath taught us to pray to him under the title of "Our Father," who is always ready to receive the prayers, and to relieve the wants of his children; and as there is no command for this practice, so neither was it in use for some ages in the church. In the fourth century, the saints, when they were commemorated at the altar, were not prayed *to*, but *for*. Even the Blessed Virgin was prayed *for*, with the rest, as appears by St. Chrysostom's liturgy.

liturgy. The invocation of saints, and of the Virgin, was introduced into the church of Antioch, about the year 470; and if the practice be orthodox, that church, you will observe, was more perfect than the church of Rome, for the space of 130 years; the latter not having admitted it until the year 600. From that time it has indeed flourished most wonderfully; so that ten prayers are addressed to the Virgin mother, for one that is offered to the Almighty Creator and Governor of the world.

THESE historical remarks, simply laid before any intelligent christian, would be sufficient, one should think, to convince him of the weakness of the foundation on which saint-worship is built; without recurring to metaphysical discussions concerning the nature of the soul.

BUT there is one particular more to be taken notice of, and that of no small importance, before we leave this head. Our author, in order to humble our pride yet more effectually, if possible, has thought fit to reduce us to the state of vegetables; observing, that we begin like them, and from them; like them we live for a while, and then like them we decay and die; soon afterwards we become nourishment to them, and are turned into their substance again. And thus

thus the world goes round. The conclusion then is obvious ; that a cabbage and a man are composed of the very same materials, and are equally vegetable in their nature ; the specific difference consisting in the different modification and disposition of their parts, which indeed produceth a variety in some few trifling circumstances, such as walking, talking, building houses, writing books, &c. But whether the cabbage, or the man hath the advantage is not very easy to determine. If the life of the one admits of greater variety, is it not thereby exposed to trouble and bustle and toil ? and what is the end of all the labours of man, but, " Vanity and vexation of spirit." Whereas the other, content in its own humble lot, and indifferent to the various disappointments and revolutions, to which all human affairs are continually subject, passeth its days in all the tranquility and innocence of rural life ; and even in its fall contributes no inconsiderable share towards the production, not only of the laborious hind, the ingenious artificer, and industrious trader, but the statesman, the soldier, and the scholar, who fill the busiest, most important, and most honourable scenes upon the stage of this ambitious world, and are all answerable for their respective talents inspired by the cabbage.

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THUS far the author has proceeded in his usual method of reason and observation ; but I am persuaded, he is too much a man of honour to claim this ingenious discovery as his own. For, besides the volumes that have been written expressly on the subject, nothing is more frequent in all writers than the comparison of the human and vegetable natures. Not only poets and orators, but the sacred writers themselves delight to illustrate the one by the other. The latter have indeed gone further than an allusive resemblance ; they have affirmed the similarity, or rather identity in proper and literal terms. “ All flesh is grass,” saith the prophet Isaiah, xi. 6. a passage which has strangely escaped our author’s sagacity : by which this argument stands unlike the rest, without the confirmation of scripture, and as none requires such support more, I am happy to have suggested it to him, for the benefit of a new edition (when the present is sold off) of this excellent work. This omission is the more surprising, as the Doctor has gratified his readers with the fairest deduction from and comment upon the words. “ Solomon and Sir Isaac Newton,” saith he [page 71] “ were the production of what their fathers eat.”

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WHAT an invaluable treasure would it be to the world (as well as a considerable emolument to Dr. Servetus) if he could ascertain the diet which David and Mr. Newton lived on. But as that is not to be hoped for, the Doctor is earnestly entreated to supply that loss, by obliging the publick with an account of the food most commonly used at his own father's table. I do not restrain it to the old GENTLEMAN's own eating, because if there was any dish the Doctor's mother was particularly fond of, especially at supper, much important information may be conveyed in the account of that circumstance; which tho' omitted in the case of the other two wife men is apprehended to be of the greatest consequence; the diet of the wife meriting at least equal attention as the husband's, perhaps sometimes greater, for reasons too obvious to require a particular explanation.

BUT it is time to proceed to the consideration of the second general proposition.

'It is asserted by the CLERGY,' the Doctor is pleased to observe, [page 111.] 'that christianity is a revealed religion.' In this instance he does the clergy justice; nor could they have suspected that they had the misfortune to give him offence by that assertion. And yet it seems,

they are unhappily mistaken. When his favourite doctrine of the soul was to be supported, he appeals to christianity as a revealed religion; [page 60] but here it must not be a revealed religion, lest a string of very bad consequences should follow; the first of which is, 'that it must relate to some principles of faith different from, and independent of those of the religion of nature.' Now, if the Doctor will but allow me to change one word in this supposed consequence, and for *principles* to read *articles*, I shall be able, I trust, to quiet all his apprehensions. For, although revelation contains a greater number of particulars than natural religion, yet the foundation of faith and moral obligation are the very same in both, viz. the reason of things, and the will of God, whether the latter be notified by natural conscience, or by additional information. Such supernatural information in christianity, whatever hath induced him to deny it in this place, is expressly admitted in the very next page [112.] 'I find,' saith our author, 'in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, some things which my reason could not inform me of; but none I cannot assent to. O, *si sic omnia!* did he pursue that principle with a constant tenor, the controversy between him and the clergy would very soon be at an end. And in truth the charge
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against them on this point appears to be the more extraordinary, when it is considered, that the 9th and 10th chapters of this miscellaneous work are entirely dedicated to prove, that the prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, whose divine mission, and that of his apostles, is there acknowledged to have been evidenced by diverse miracles. And thus the author having shewn christianity to have been built on the foundation of both prophecy and miracles, what further external evidence can he require, to authenticate it as a divine revelation? What further external evidence could he, upon his own principles, admit, supposing any could be offered? To the internal one, of the purity and excellency of its doctrine he himself bears express testimony. [page 118.]

STILL, although he has no objection to the doctrine, yet he has an insuperable one to the person and nature of Christ, as commonly understood by orthodox christians. The author's usual method of enquiry by observation, tends only to betray him into error. The case is singular, and will not bear to be treated according to the common course of things. It is a fact, nevertheless, satisfactorily proved according to the established rules of evidence; that is to say, on
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the testimony of competent witnesses, who derive their knowledge from unerring authority, who had no interest in handing down a falsehood, but who, on the contrary, by declaring the truth, exposed themselves to persecution and death ; all temporal power being at that time hostile to christianity. On testimony of this kind, we believe Christ to have been born in a supernatural way, of a pure Virgin, by the immediate and total act of almighty God ; which, extraordinary and miraculous as it was, St. Matthew informs us, was long before predicted. But our author, not having met with any similar case in the course of his practice, is pleased to reject this evidence ; and as to the prediction, he gives himself no trouble about it ; affirming, *sans ceremonie*, that the evangelist is mistaken in the application of a prophecy, which related to quite another event, [page 138.] And thus he boldly resolves to cut the knot, which he found it would give him too much trouble to untie. But though neither the vigour of his arm, nor the temper of his steel can be doubted, yet unfortunately the effect was not answerable to either ; for, the stroke being directed with more impetuosity than judgment, passed over the head of the object of his resentment, and by overstraining, fell with a flat edge upon one Maher-shalal-hashbaz,

baz, who was not concerned in the dispute. In fact, the prophecy attacked by our author is in the 8th chapter of Isaiah; whereas that referred to by the Evangelist (*a Virgin shall conceive, &c.*) is in the 7th. They are distinct prophecies, delivered with different views; one being given to Ahaz, as an assurance that Rezin and Pekah should not prevail against him, and was to be accomplished speedily; the other, that the house of David, notwithstanding a formidable confederacy against it, should remain and flourish until the coming of the Messiah, and this prophecy is delivered in terms which could be strictly and perfectly accomplished by no other event than the conception of the Blessed Virgin, and the birth of that Son of Man, who alone was properly and literally to be acknowledged for Emanuel, or GOD with us.

BUT our author is not only dissatisfied with the application of this prophecy, but with the genealogies of Jesus Christ delivered by St. Matthew and St. Luke, as differing one from the other. In order to clear up this difficulty, which I cannot but say, is proposed in very abrupt and harsh terms, it is to be observed, that the royal line of David by Solomon being extinct in Jechoniah, the crown and kingdom passed into the next
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younger line of Nathan (another son of David) in Salathiel and Zerobabel ; which Zerobabel having two sons Abiud and Rhesa, the royal dignity descended of right, upon the line of Abiud, of which Joseph was the last ; and he marrying the Virgin Mary, who sprung from the line of Rhesa, the younger son of Zerobabel, (as some imagine) having no issue himself, his right passed into the line of Mary, being next of kin, and by that means upon Jesus, her son ; who was both naturally the son of David, and also legally King of the Jews, the latter of which is accounted to us by St. Matthew (who being by birth a jew, deduced the pedigree of Christ from Abraham the father of the Hebrews), as the former is by St. Luke, who being a Heathen by birth, traceth it up to Adam, the father of all mankind.

To this explanation, extracted from Dr. Stackhouse's history of the bible, I shall beg permission of our author to add a presumptive argument, which the liberal and candid enquirer may not think altogether unworthy attention ; viz. that as no objection was made to these genealogies by the jews, who lived at the time when they were first published, although most of all interested to invalidate them if possible, by their publick registers, which were then carefully preserved, we may

may safely acquiesce in them without scruple, whatever difficulties they are attended with at this day, when the jewish records, which have been long since lost, cannot be appealed to on either side. Besides, however these two Evangelists may differ in particular circumstances, it is not credible that they should essentially contradict one another, or say in the beginning of their relations what would necessarily overthrow the credit of the whole. These writers were good men, or they were bad. They were sincere reporters of the truth, or else deceivers who designed to cheat the world. If honest and good, they cannot be supposed to contradict one another. If they were cheats, it is not to be imagined, that they would have admitted so much difference in their account. They would rather have taken care, to prevent any seeming contradiction between them. But were this matter set right, he is far from thinking with the clergy on the divinity of Christ. What, though it be asserted in the most express terms in the beginning of St. John's gospel, which is generally believed to have been written with that very intent, to assert the divine nature of Christ more explicitly than the other evangelists had done ! It is no matter. St John, he is persuaded, meant no such thing. His sole object being to describe the

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eternity and divinity of TRUTH, [p. 144.] Allegory is the key, with which the Doctor unlocks all secrets and (as the reader knows) he is remarkably expert in the use of it ; witness the fall of our first parents ; on which occasion he indulgeth his vein of allegorising to some purpose ; gravely supposing Adam and Eve to have been placed in the garden of Eden, not as Moses informs us, “ to dress it and to keep it ; to increase and multiply, to replenish the earth and subdue it ;” not with a view to any useful employment, or salutary exercise, without which both body and mind grow languid, and life itself becomes tedious and irksome ; not with a view to produce new inhabitants, whom they were to instruct in the necessary arts of life, and the important duties of virtue and religion.——No : No. If the world has hitherto understood the matter in this light, it has been all this while in a great mistake, which the Doctor was born to rectify. Accordingly, he is so good to tell us, that what is erroneously called by Moses, a command, with a blessing annexed, was so far from a real command and blessing, that it was on the contrary, the only thing from which they were restrained ; being in fact no other than

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the fruit

*Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe.*

PARADISE, you are to understand, was a delightful scene, in which Adam and Eve were placed to solace themselves with the raptures of Platonic love ; to walk hand in hand for ever, admiring each other, and the beauty of the creation ; without a thought of any one to spring from them, with whom they might share, and by sharing increase the blessings they enjoyed. For, neither that benevolence of heart, which delights in the communication of good, nor the exercise of social virtues, although the source of the highest happiness, and the most certain title to esteem, was (according to our ingenious author) any part of our nature as it came out of the hands of God. They were, it seems, entirely the consequence of the first transgression. What an improvement is this of the jejune, literal history, delivered by Moses ! How much doth it exalt our ideas of the wisdom and bounty of the great Creator, and of the excellent purposes for which this globe was furnished with so magnificent and glorious an apparatus ! This is a discovery then, on which our author hath reason to exult. It was certainly unknown to the inquisitive Galen, when

he wrote his book *De Ufu Partium*, and was reserved for the happier cerebrum of Servetus. I heartily congratulate the clergy upon it ; as it cannot but serve to bring the Doctor and them nearer together on the subject of mysteries, as well as on that of revealed religion. For, what mystery can be more incomprehensible to the understanding, than that this whole world was made for the sole use of one immortal pair ? Or what precept more evidently incongruous to those of nature, than this supposed prohibition to the first parents of mankind ?

BUT to return from this digression. The Doctor has not done half his business by allegorising St. John's gospel. The epistle to the Hebrews, which was written much earlier, is no less express in asserting the divinity of Christ, and more copious in expatiating on his amazing condescension in taking human nature upon him, whereas he is in his own essence infinitely superior to the highest angels ; being the SON of GOD, "whom he hath appointed heir of all things ; by whom also he made the worlds ; being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power." Passages, which, with the remainder of this first chapter (consisting of extracts from the book

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of Psalms, in confirmation of this important doctrine), I earnestly recommend to our author's serious consideration. They certainly are applied by the apostle to the person of Christ, of whom alone they can any way be understood ; nor is it possible, in my apprehension, to elude the force of them by any allegorical interpretation. The person is the very same of whom St. John Baptist bore record. " After me cometh a man, who is preferred before me : for he was before me ;" not as to the time of his birth ; for St. John was elder. But *πρὸς μου*, signifies, that he was my superior in dignity and excellency of nature, and was also prior to me in existence, being the Son of God, endless ages before he appeared as the Son of Man. " He that cometh from Heaven is above all. I have need to be baptised of Thee ; and comest Thou to me ?" Is it to be supposed, that the Baptist had a *prosopopœia* in his thoughts, and that he addresses himself to, or speaks of any other than the real, living person of Christ, to whom, having seen the Holy Ghost descend on him, he explicitly bears witness, " This is the Son of God," as the voice from Heaven had before testified, " This is my beloved Son."

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SHOULD the Doctor upon this occasion have recourse to what he has, I think, somewhere intimated, that his belief is to be determined, not by what any body else, but by what Christ has himself said in this matter, we will join issue upon that footing. He will therefore allow me to refresh his memory with a passage or two, where Christ declares himself the Son of God. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. My Father is in me and I in him." John v. 18. x. 33, 38, at which the jews took such offence, that they were about to put him to death, "because," said they, "he made himself equal with God." For they understood his words in their natural import; and had not the words been properly and justly to have been so understood, "he who though in the form of a servant, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," we may be sure, would, not have used them. On another occasion he saith, "Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Again; "What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?" having before said, "I came down from Heaven." This last passage is so irreconcilable with the Socinian system, that instead of understanding it allegorically, as spoken in the person of Truth (the impertinence of that kind of interpretation being

too obvious), some of that sect, in order to evade the force of the literal sense, which they could not but admit, although they deny that Christ came down originally from Heaven, have been driven to suppose him to have ascended thither between the time of his birth and the beginning of his ministry. But of that temporary ascension, there is not the least colour in any part of the gospel history. The words must therefore necessarily be understood of the state of Christ in Heaven, before his incarnation; for "that he ascended, what is it, but that he also descended first into these lower parts of the earth?" i. e. he came down to this earth from Heaven, where "he was in the beginning with God."

To these proofs of the divinity of Christ our author affects to oppose some remarks which he makes on his humanity; not only ascribing to him qualities and circumstances common to all, such as gradual increase of stature, and improvement in knowledge, and the like, which we readily admit, but also charging him, when his faculties were in their highest vigour, with weakness of judgment and want of discernment, in the case of St. Peter, and with irresolution and imbecility of mind at the approach of death. This charge, confidently as it is urged, I trust, it will not be difficult effectually to disapprove. OUR

OUR Saviour, in order to give his disciples an opportunity of declaring their faith in him, takes occasion to enquire of them, what notion people had in general formed of him ; and then asks them, what their own opinion of him was. " But whom say ye, that I am ? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Of this answer Christ expresseth his approbation, and tells him, that " he would give him the keys of the kingdom of Heaven : " i. e. that he should be the first of all the apostles to publish to the Gentiles the gospel dispensation, and convert them to christianity, which is frequently stiled in the New Testament, the kingdom of Heaven.

BY having the keys of that kingdom is not meant a power of admitting into, or excluding from the next world, (as the vulgar may be apt to imagine) but the privilege of opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, through which they might enter in, and become partakers of the christian covenant. They actually did so by means of St. Peter's preaching. Acts x. 5. 44. And thus he was " the Rock, on which the church was to be built." Thus far all is well. But soon afterwards, our Saviour making use of this opportunity, to discourse on the sufferings he

was to undergo, " Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord. This shall not be unto thee ;" which being said, not in the spirit of lamentation and condolence, but of angry expostulation, our Saviour reprovèd him in very severe terms, such as might best serve to bring him to a sense of his error. " Get thee behind me, Satan : for thou favourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." God hath determined that the redemption of mankind shall be accomplished by my death ; and thou temptest me to oppose his will. In this thou actest the part, not of a friend, but of an enemy ; of that great enemy of men's souls, the Devil. Depart therefore from my presence. As Christ had before commended St. Peter for a good confession, he now no less justly blames and reprovèd him. And what is there in this that any way implies, Christ to have been mistaken, in St. Peter's character ? He who conferred the gift of " the discerning of spirits" upon others, could not fail to possess that power himself in the fullest extent. In fact, " he knew what was in man, and needed not that any should testify of man." But our author by introducing this passage seems to insinuate, that St. Peter was an improper person to be intrusted with a commission of such importance. To which I shall only say, that he

was intrusted with it, and did execute it most successfully, to the conversion of great multitudes. So that if any question remains to be discussed, it is no more than this, whether the appointment of Divine Providence, or the opinion of Dr. Servetus was right ; which, if he had not already prejudged it, might have been left to his own modesty to determine.

THE other part of the charge concerns our Saviour's behaviour under his sufferings, at the approach, and in the article of death. Now, in the prophecies acknowledged by our author, [Page 97] to have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Messiah is described to be of the meekest and gentlest spirit, and we may appeal to the Doctor's experience, whether such a disposition be not constantly accompanied with a particular delicacy of nature, subject to be more easily and deeply affected than any other kind of constitution. This was most remarkably the case of our blessed Lord. His feelings were most tender and exquisite. He wept for Lazarus. He wept for Jerusalem. His compassion burst forth in the most lively manner upon all occasions ; being excited not only by the diseases and distresses, but even by the wickedness of men. And who knows how large a share the concern for the condemnation which
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the jews were then bringing upon themselves might make in his agony ? He prayed, it is true, that " the cup might pass from him." But shall the severity of the conflict, which in all other cases is justly allowed to be a fund of merit, be turned in this case alone into a reproach ? His prayers were always accompanied with perfect resignation to the Divine Will, and the firmest resolution to obey it. He knew, that to die for the sins of the world, was the purpose for which he came into it. Of this purpose he never lost sight ; nor did he neglect any fit opportunity of discoursing upon it with his disciples, in order to prepare them for that mournful event. When the hour was approaching, instead of declining his fate, he went to the accustomed place of his devotions, where he knew he was to be apprehended ; and no sooner did the armed band appear, but " Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon him, said unto them, Whom seek ye ? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he." The meekness and dignity of his behaviour struck them with astonishment. Full of horror at the act they were employed in, " they went back, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye ? and they said Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith, I have told you that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let

these go their way." Unconcerned for himself, his solicitude was for the safety of his disciples. Will our author say, that this was the behaviour of a timorous dispirited man ? How could stronger evidence be given of the firmest and most collected mind ? Suitable to this was his whole demeanour afterwards. Patient and submissive, composed and resolute. To his behaviour on his trial our author bears the justest testimony ; and it is surprising, that he did not recollect with what magnanimity as to his own sufferings, and at the same time with what tender concern for his country he addresses the women that were attending him to his crucifixion. " Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me ; but weep for yourselves and your children." Nor was the serenity of his mind discomposed, or his compassion for his murderers abated, even by the anguish of his sufferings on the cross. " Father," saith he, " forgive them, for they know not what they do." But all this is overlooked ; and we are told, with some little extenuation indeed of expression, that ' he seems to have thought that his father had forsaken him, and exclaims on the cross, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" ' But to use our author's own phrase on the occasion, ' Let us review this a little,' and if we do, I cannot but persuade myself, that

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it will appear in a different light ; not as an exclamation of despondency, but on the contrary, as Christ's solemn appeal to the spectators ; those words being the beginning of the 22d Psalm, wherein were foretold many remarkable circumstances of the tragedy then performing before their eyes ; the accomplishment of which predictions could not but serve to mark him for the true Messiah, whom they were then expecting.

I have thus considered these two formidable objections. Whether the answers I have given to them be satisfactory or not, the Public will judge. So far as Dr. Servetus is concerned, I shall beg leave to say, that if he considers the proofs for the Divinity of Christ with the same candour with which I proposed them, he will have before him at least a fuller, and I trust a truer, view of the subject than he has thought proper to lay before the Public. If he thinks that his new distinction between the private and public character of Christ will help to clear up any difficulties, he is certainly right in resorting to it. But as far as I understand it, I do not expect that benefit from it, and therefore I shall adhere to the old distinction of two natures in Christ, divine and human, a distinction by which every material objection will be obviated, and without which the christian system, is not, in my opinion, intelligible.

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BUT although enough hath been said of the person and nature of Christ, yet there is another point so closely connected with it, that it ought not to be passed over. The point I mean is the nature of the offices which Christ was to execute. As the "prophet that should come into the world," Christ was readily enough acknowledged by the generality of the Jews : and as the whole of his character was not opened at once, but (in great condescension to the circumstances and infirmities of the people) was unfolded by degrees, we find them looking up to him principally in that capacity. In that capacity his discourses in the former part of his ministry appear to have been chiefly delivered ; and until further manifestations of a superior title were made, their belief in him as "That Prophet," was sufficient.

BUT with this office of prophet another was necessarily joined in the Messiah, viz. that of a king ; and as the family and descent of Jesus were well known, he was likewise acknowledged "as son of David," and consequently "King of Israel." In this quality we find him frequently addressed. The prejudices of the Jews, however, had led them into fatal mistakes concerning the nature of his kingdom, and the more desirous they were of promoting his temporal grandeur, the less

less they were prepared to submit to his spiritual government, to which he in vain endeavoured to draw their attention.

THERE was, moreover, a third office implied in the character of the Messiah, viz. that of a Priest, to make atonement for the sins of the world, by the sacrifice of himself. A relation of the highest importance to every sinful mortal, the necessity of which in the scheme of Divine Providence was all along prefigured in types and emblems, as well as foretold by the prophets : for which reason Christ was called by John Baptist “ the Lamb of God ;” and in the Revelation he is stiled “ the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” That is to say, from the beginning to the complete perfection of the christian dispensation, Christ is considered as the ransom and propitiation for the sins of the world. I will not fatigue the Doctor with a multitude of passages (for they occur in almost every page of the New-Testament) ; but shall content myself with referring him to the prophecy of Isaiah ; which, tho’ quoted by him for another purpose [page 93], will be sufficient to shew him, that Christ was not only to keep the commandments of God without any deviation, and thereby exhibit an example of perfect obedience, but was likewise to pay
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down a ransom for sin, and to be a propitiation, in right of which he was, according to the prophecy, "to make intercession for the transgressors." Isai. liii. 12.

IN the first of these capacities Christ is acknowledged by Doctor Servetus, who professeth himself his disciple ; but the Doctor placeth the whole merit of Christ in the truth of his doctrine and the perfection of his practice ; supposing his exaltation to be solely the reward of his complete, unerring obedience. For the authority of Christ, as king and head of his church, he seems to have little, or no deference ; but treats his positive institutions, and external ordinances, with unbecoming disrespect. Nor doth the propitiation of Christ, than which nothing is more fully insisted on in scripture, seem to be any part of his system. My design in these remarks being not so much to refute as to rectify, I have taken the liberty, although our author is silent on the foregoing articles, to propose them, being convinced, that without receiving Christ in this threefold relation, as the prophet who had authority to "teach the way of God in truth," as our Lord and King, "the head over all things to the church," and as our high priest, who by the sacrifice of himself "hath reconciled us to God

God through faith in his blood," our notions of christianity cannot but be essentially defective and erroneous.

THERE remains to be considered Doctor Servetus's third general proposition, viz. that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not founded on scripture, but on the decisions of the church. To this proposition it will be a sufficient answer to cite two passages, viz. 1. the form of baptism instituted by Christ himself, " In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ;" 2. the apostolical benediction, " the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost." I do not produce the " Three that bear record in Heaven," because it seems they are excepted to as parties ; and certain as I am of establishing their competency, yet after such a caveat entered, it might possibly minister occasion to cavil, and prove the means of protracting the cause. I shall therefore wave any advantage to be drawn from thence, and in order to bring the matter to a short issue, am content to rest the merits on the evidence already stated.

OUR author, I am confident, would strongly oppose the authority of any religious rite, that would either explicitly, or implicitly, confound

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the honour due to God with that of any creature, of how exalted a rank soever. But in any sense but that of the orthodox, that would inevitably be the case in the sacrament of baptism. For to be baptised into the name, is to be dedicated to the service of God ; which being no less than a professed acknowledgement that he is the author of our religion and the arbiter of our salvation, to join with him any other being would be rank idolatry. Supposing then the Son and Holy Ghost to be inferior to the Father, they could have no share in this solemn act of devotion, of which they are however joint objects. We must therefore conclude, that they are not inferior, but equal to the father, as touching the Godhead. The same reasoning holds good likewise applied to the apostolical benediction. The Son and Holy Ghost could no more in this case than in baptism, be joined together with the Father, if there were not in all the same parity of nature and dignity, and equal power of conferring grace and blessing. In a word, if the three persons were not equally " God blessed for evermore." Thus from these two passages we are able not only to prove the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity to be founded in scripture, long before the discussion and establishment of it in the Council of Nice, but that the determination of that

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council is necessarily in substance included therein. But the restless curiosity of man is not to be satisfied without attempting to penetrate into the recesses of nature, and to find out the manner how every thing subsists ; nor is the essence of the first Cause thought by some an object too high for their understanding ; indulging on the one hand, a bold imagination to supply the supposed defects of scripture, or pursuing a visionary speculation to explain that which is inexplicable ; and on the other, rejecting whatever property of the Deity quadrates not with their understanding. At present it is an inquirer of the latter kind with whom we have to do ; who is not to be satisfied with the plainest truths of Holy Writ, unless they correspond with his own reason and observation. Tell him not of mystery. Whatever is not plain, cannot be religion. He can gravely quote that “ secret things belong to the Lord :” but insists at the same time that they should belong to him too. He condescends indeed to acknowledge [page 71] that he can conceive instances of the Divine Power beyond his experience : but the essence of God, he thinks, should be clear of all mystery : for what we are required to believe, that we ought to be able to comprehend. But permit me to ask you, Doctor, have you in every, or even in any instance, that clear, explicit know-

ledge of nature, which you expect to have of every subject in religion? Do you meet with nothing mysterious and perplexing in the material works of God? Do you perfectly understand how trees grow and produce their like? How such virtues are implanted and operate in herbs and minerals? You see the effect; but the manner how, and the means whereby, that effect is produced will be concealed from us, until "we shall be equal to the Angels," if it be even then revealed. And can we think it easier to fathom the nature of the source of all Being? "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Hell, what canst thou know?" Is it not one of the first conclusions, that we can form from contemplating the divine nature, that it is, and must be to us, probably to every created intelligence, incomprehensible. For, "how can we apprehend a duration without time; an eternity all present together; a being that is self-existent, neither produced by itself, nor by any other? Yet all this hinders not our belief of a first cause; being forced to confess it by undeniable reason, though we cannot solve these and a thousand more difficulties and seeming contradictions, which necessarily arise from
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“ that supposition.”* Surely this should prepare us to meet without much surprise, some difficulties in revelation.

As to the Athanasian Creed, whatever difficulties there may, and great one we must acknowledge there are to comprehend the doctrine delivered in that confession of faith, we may venture to assert, and the fact will support us, the difficulties are neither more nor greater, nay, not so many, nor so great in this, as in the systems of such as think fit to reject it. All of them destroy either the unity of the Godhead, or the Trinity ; whilst this creed equally preserves both. We know by scripture, that there are three persons, each of himself God, and by scripture and reason, that there neither is, nor can be more Gods than one, nor any subordination or degrees in the Godhead, for that would be to suppose it divisible into parts ; or distinguishable into higher or lower. The conclusion is, that the three persons must be equal, must be the one, supreme Almighty God.

AND now, my gentle reader, having performed my promise to thee, and brought thee home, I will take my leave, with my hearty wishes, that
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* Leslie's first dialogue.

in thy future excursions thou may'st travel a pleasanter road and meet with better entertainment than hast been provided for thee by thy poor guide in this ramble.

NOR can I part with my author without a word or two. A good man, he tells us, will take advice in good part, and be improved by it. Let me then intreat him to revise his notions carefully. Some he may see reason to retract; others may have taken too strong possession: but whenever he happens again to be under the irresistible impulse of publishing, let him do it with that candour, and urbanity that become the scholar and the gentleman, and then he will ensure respect to both his person and his works, however widely he may differ from the established opinions. If he thinks that some of his positions have been treated with too much levity, I can only say, that his positions only were my object and not his person. By general character the latter is as respectable, as the former appeared ridiculous; and after all, the Doctor cannot with any good grace deny me the liberty he has himself taken, of delivering his sentiments in the manner he liked best. I could not but feel for the order I have the honour to be of: but he will do me the justice to observe that I have not been provoked "to render railing

railing for railing." Indeed the sacred lemma prefixed to the book ought to be a protection to the author from every quarter, The rights of private judgment are sacred. "To our own master alone we stand, or fall;" and whilst I expect the benefit of that appeal, God forbid that I should deny it to any: or reject any man who calls himself a Christian "because he followeth not us:" because his opinions are not in exact conformity with those of the communion of which I am a member. With these sentiments of Christian charity I bid our author heartily farewell. Commending him to the divine grace; that his errors may be rectified and his faith in Christ established and perfected.

F I N I S.

ERRATUM, in page 42, line 18, for, excluding from the next world; *read*, excluding from the seat of bliss in the next world.

